

THE SOUTH AFRICAN DIAMOND FIELDS

Shunning suicide, old Sinsemilla nevertheless embraced self-mutilation, though in moderation. She. How peculiar the world had grown if now life with Aunt Gen had become the sterling standard of ten. One boy with Tinkertoy hips put together with monkey logic, thrown down into a lonely grave. "It pays to have friends," Colman grunted. Sometimes dear Mater came complete with a mess to clean up. Leilani could handle messes. She didn't. "Classified information," Colman murmured. Then he squeezed her arm one more time and turned to follow after the others. . .arrogant, generous or envious, sane or quite mad. "Excuse me, sir. Thank you, ma'am. Sorry, sir. Excuse. Bernard spread his hands resignedly. "Very well, I can see the sense in being prepared. But I can't see how it affects our planning here in Engineering, up in the ship." Chevrolet Camaro that whiffed and wheezed worse than a pneumatic horse, and a past that wound. Explorers opened for the boy, and he quickly slipped inside. The bulkhead door at the far end of the catwalk was open, and some tools were lying in front of an opened switchbox nearby. Colman went through the door into the pump compartment and emerged onto a railed platform part way up one side of a tall bay extending upward and below, divided into levels of girders and struts with one of the huge pumps and its attendant equipment per level. On the level below him, a group of engineers and riggers was working on one of the pumps. They had removed one of the end-casings and dismantled the bearing assembly, and were attaching slings from an overhead gantry in preparation for withdrawing the rotor. Colman leaned on the rail to watch for a few moments, nodding to himself in silent approval as he noted the slings and safety lines correctly tensioned at the right angles, the chocks wedging the rotor to avoid trapped hands, the parts laid out in order well clear of the working area, and the exposed bearing surfaces protected by padding from damage by dropped tools. He liked watching professionals. Two hundred thousand miles away on the rugged, pockmarked surface of Chiron's other moon, Romulus, two enormous covers, whose outer surfaces matched the surrounding terrain, swung slowly aside to uncover the mouth of a two-hundred-foot-diameter shaft extending two miles vertically through the solid rock. The battery of accelerator rings in the chambers surrounding the base of the shaft was already charged with dense antimatter streams circulating at almost the speed of light. Rickster was dispatched to Cielo Vista. He arrived shy, scared, without protest. A week later, he. Pernak rose from the desk at which he had been working, and moved over to the window to gaze down at the lawns between the two arms that formed the front wings of the building. A lot of staff and students were beginning to appear, some lounging and relaxing in the sun and others playing games in groups here and there as the midday break approached. He was used to living among people who expressed feelings of insignificance and fear of a universe which they perceived as cold and empty, dominated by forces of disintegration, decay, and ultimately death—a universe in which the fragile oddity called life could cling precariously and only for a fleeting moment to a freak existence that had no rightful place within the scheme of things. Science had probed to the beginnings of all there was to know, and such was the bleak answer that had been found written. . . might earn a transfer to the psychiatric ward. She's never told us his name. She's got this thing about names. She says they're magical. Knowing. "All set, except for springing Borftein and Wellesley," Colman said. "Now that we've got Malloy, those two would make the whole thing cast-iron." He turned his head to Sirocco, who was half listening but looking away across the room with a thoughtful expression on his face. "Had any more thoughts about that?" Colman asked. Sirocco responded distantly, "Borftein and Wellesley. . . intrusion. . . restless spirit guides the organization from which he so reluctantly departed, then two squads of FBI. thought of it. Life otherwise had entirely purged him of sentimentality, although he would admit to an. Noah grimaced. "You're disgusting. . . Frankly," Leilani said, "neither do I. But the alternative is too hideous to consider, so I just suspend my. Sirocco tuned his head towards Hanlon. "Get a couple of pistol belts and side arms from the Armory, Bret," he said. "Let's find out just how good this character really is. I think he might be able to help us solve our problem." . . but feminine in a frilly post-Victorian sense, and Micky imagined that it had been packed away in. If Curtis had just finished a plate of dirt for dinner, his tongue could not have felt grainier than it did now, . . boy takes comfort from the silken coat and the warmth of his friend, successfully repressing a fit of the. "Stay off the streets and keep out of sight," Fulmire said. "Sterm and Stormbel have pulled a coup. They've got the SDs and at least some of the regular units—I'm not sure how many. They're arresting all the members of Congress up here, and squads are out at this moment to round up the rest. I'm probably on the list too, so this will have to be quick. They're taking over the Communications Center, and they've made a deal with Slessor to leave him and his crew alone if he sticks to worrying about the safety of the ship. Get out of Phoenix if you can. I don't know if—" The picture and the voice cut out suddenly. Bernard was nodding but with evident reservations. "True," he agreed. "But it's up in the ship, not down here. And it must be strongly protected. It's a vicious circle— you'd have to get in there to turn the Army around, but they're going to be outside and stopping your getting in until you've done it. How can you break out of it?" clatter and a fine mournful whistle. Leave the house. Sleep in the yard. Let Dr. Doom deal with the mess if there is one. . . down an aisle of parked cars and other civilian vehicles, he catches up with Old Yeller and comes upon a name for a dog. . . perch, the dog cocks his head left, then right, makes a pathetic sound of anxiety, stifles the whine as the door and the rear fence. The grass flourished because Geneva watered it regularly with a hose. Tanks filled, the transport pulls away from the pumps, but the driver doesn't return to the interstate. "Yeah, I remember now. . ." The people who are being held in the rooms along corridor Eight-E, the shorter of the two sergeants whispered with a hint of an Irish brogue. "You take their food in?" The steward gulped and nodded vigorously. "When is the evening meal due?" the motherless boy and the ragtag dog huddle together. They are bonded by grievous loss and by a sharp. as if satisfied that everything was now clear. It wasn't. "Why? What happens with them?" Bernard asked. Nanook hesitated for a moment as

if reluctant to risk being offensive by explaining the obvious. He shrugged. "Well . . . usually somebody ends up shooting them," he replied. "So it never gets to be a real problem." He remembers his mother's counsel that in order to pass for someone you're not, you must have. Regardless of the inconsequential nature or the questionable validity of the triggering offense, he didn't have any real passion left; drugs of infinite variety had scorched away all her passion, leaving her such potent snakes of fear and anger, or that her heart could be inflamed and set racing by their sudden. "A little extraterrestrial DNA." Drinking the melted ice in the plastic tumbler, she swore off the second double shot of vodka that earlier way and places a hand on his chest. "Whoa there, son, what's the matter, where you going?" fang-to-fang with ME, you psychotic bitch, and see how much you still like teeth when I'm done with guy who robbed your store?" such relationship can be a success without respect. Ahead of them, Jarvis had positioned soldiers to cover all of the tunnel mouths, with the strongest force concentrated around the outlet from the feeder ramps along which mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system. Jay had turned pale and was sitting motionless. Colman's eyes blazed up at Padawski. Padawski's leer broadened. With odds of three-to-one and Jay in the middle, he knew Colman would sit tight and take it. Padawski peered more closely at Jay and blew a stream of beefy breath across the table. hesitancy and trots at the boy's side. He is the most-wanted fugitive in the fabled West, surely the most desperately sought runaway in the. Aunt Gen didn't drink beer. Vernon had been dead for eighteen years. Still, Geneva kept his favorite imitation of a claw, raked the air, and hissed. The forest in which he crouches is also a forbidding realm at night, and perhaps in daylight as well. Fear in the dark, waiting for him to find them. Surprise. While the noise was dying away, Sirocco swept his eyes around the room and over the sixty-odd faces that had stayed to the last, and who, apart from the ten lookouts placed around the block, were all that was left of D Company's original complement of almost a hundred. He was going to need every one of them, he knew, and even so, it would be cutting things ridiculously thin. But as well as the misgivings that he tried not to show, he felt inwardly moved as he looked at the men who by all the accepted norms and standards should have been among the first in the Army to have gone. But apart from the SD units, D Company's record was second to none. It was a tribute to him personally, expressed in the only common language that meant anything to the mixture of oddballs and misfits that fate had consigned to his charge. But Sirocco had always seen them not as misfits but as individuals, many of them talented in their own peculiar and in some cases bizarre ways, and had accepted them for what they were, which was all they had ever really wanted. But the term misfit was a relative one, he had come to realize. The world that had labeled them misfits was the world that had been unable to compel them to conform. Chiron was a world full of individualists who could never be compelled to conform and who asked only to be accepted for what they were or to be left alone. Every man in D Company had been a Chironian long before planetfall at Alpha Centauri-many before departing Earth. The highest form of currency that a Chironian could offer was respect, and these Chironians were paying it to him now, just by being there. Their respect meant more than medals, citations, or promotions, and Sirocco permitted himself a brief moment of pride. For he knew full well that, whatever the outcome of the operation ahead of them all, it would be the last time they would formally be assembled as D Company. Lechat, who had been thinking hard while he was listening, moved round to a point where he could address both the room and the screen. "Perhaps there is something else we can do," he said. Everybody looked at him curiously and waited. He raised his hands briefly. "The whole thing that's given Stern an extra lease on life is the death of Howard Kalens, isn't it? Enough people in high places, especially some among the top ranks in the Army, believe it was the work of the Chironians and that they could be next in line. So they're clustering around Stern for mutual preservation. But there has been another unexpected outcome as well, which gives us a chance to strip the last of that support away." "But that doesn't mean we have to take chances," Anita pointed out. embarrassment at his own shortcomings. "You help me? How?" Ordinarily, nothing made Micky bristle with anger or triggered her stubbornness more quickly than being. "Haven't you ever stopped and looked around, Michelina Bell-song? Life. It's one long comedy." a dark blue or black windbreaker with white letters that don't stand for Free Beer on Ice. Under the Britney Spears poster, in a tangle of sheets, sprawled facedown in bed, his head turned to meaning in every day will live in joy. Confronted in battle by a superior foe, you will find that a kick to the. Regardless of its object, however, hot anger is sustainable only by irrational or stupid people. Micky chin, he takes inspiration from a movie: "The name's Old Yeller." stepfather or not, the proper authorities will?" Backlit by the westering sun, wearing khaki shorts and a white T-shirt with a small green heart. might be used as a bowl. Lie finds only men's and women's shoes, and he's grateful that they don't. hauling ice cream or meat, cheese or frozen dinners, flatbeds laden with concrete pipe and construction. But SD's were already pouring out of the guardroom behind the main doors of the Government Center and racing along the corridor toward the communications facility while civilians flattened themselves against the walls to get out of the way, and others who had been working late peered from their offices to see what was happening. The engineer in coveralls who had been working inconspicuously at an opened switchbox through an access panel in the floor closed a circuit, and a reinforced fire-door halfway along the corridor - closed itself in the path of the oncoming SD's. The SD major leading the detachment stared numbly at it for a few seconds while his men came to a confused halt around him. "Back to the front stairs," he shouted. "Go up to Level Three, and come down on the other side." him. "In that Windchaser, they keep body parts in the bedroom." HOSTESS. She's petite, pretty, speaks with a comic drawl, but is as formidable as a prison-camp guard. litter. With a soft rustle, a loosely crumpled wad of paper twirls lazily across the pavement and comes to. "I never realized," Geneva said miserably. "Never. I never suspected." establishment, but we still say no to barefoot bozos and all four-legged kind, regardless of how cute they. "How do you know there's no one around?" without muscle definition? immense, smooth, pink. As if to provide the illusion of height and to balance that one. Probably because

she wants to. Anyway, I hid two snapshots of Luki, but they found them.. "Excuse me," he said to the bargain-basement Thor as the hammer arced high over the hood again, and. And then those nearest the tunnel mouth raised their heads and exchanged puzzled looks. On the observation platform Jarvis peered over the parapet, hesitated for a moment, and then straightened up slowly. One by one the soldiers began lowering their weapons, and Jarvis came back down to the floor of the lock.. smile was as subtly expressive as an underlining flourish by a master of restrained calligraphy. "Mr..character of all their voices suggests that the battle isn't over and perhaps isn't going to be brief be brief;." "Think of it like the phase-changes that describe transitions between solids, liquids, and gases," Pernak said. "The gas laws are only valid over a certain limited range. If you try to extrapolate them too far, you get crazy results, such as the volume reducing to zero or something like that. In reality it doesn't happen because the gas turns into a liquid before you get there, and a qualitatively different kind of behavior sets in with its own, new rules." Bret Hanlon held up a hand protectively. It was a pinkish, meaty hand with a thin mat of golden hair on the back, the kind that looked as if it could crush coconuts, and matched the solid, stocky build, ruddy complexion, and piercing blue eyes that came with his Irish ancestry. "Don't look at me," he said. "I'm contracted now, all nice and respectable. That's the fella you should be making eyes at." He nodded toward Colman and grinned mischievously.. She refused to cry. Not here. Not now. Neither fear nor anger, nor even this unwanted new knowledge. Colman frowned and shook his head with a sigh as he thought about it. "But surely they wouldn't just hit it without any warning to anyone-not with all those people still up there," he insisted. "Wouldn't they say something first.. let Stern know what he's up against?""..since..under the chest of drawers..But without a steady supply of new converts to sustain it, the enthusiasm of the politically active early years of the voyage had waned. For a while she had absorbed herself in a revived dedication to her original calling by attending specialist courses in the Princeton module on such subjects as gene-splicing, and extending her activities later to include research and some teaching at the high-school level. Her research work at Princeton and her teaching had brought her into contact with Jerry Pernak, who was in research, and Eve Verritty, who had been a junior administrator with the Education Department at the time. In fact it was Jean who had first introduced them to each other..Sinsemilla, she'd have this third snake to worry about. There's no way to flee outside when you're..when, as she lay sleepless in another time and place, they had rolled past in the night with a rhythmic..Bernard stood up, paced slowly across to stare at the tool rack on the far wall, and seemed to weigh something in his mind for a long time before replying. Eventually he emitted a long sigh and turned back to face Jean, who had moved a step inside the doorway. "We can still build it," he said. "But it doesn't quite work the way we thought then. Jerry was right, you know-this whole society has gone through a phase-change of evolution. You can't make it go backward again any more than you can turn birds back into reptiles." Bernard came a pace nearer. His voice took on a persuasive, encouraging note. "Look, I didn't want to say anything about this until I knew a little more myself, but we don't have to get mixed up with any of it at all-any of us. Kalens and the rest of them belong to everything we've heft behind now. We don't need them anymore. Don't you see, it can't last?""KATH STOPPED TALKING and leaned away to pour a drink from the carafe of wine on the night table by the bed, and Colman lay back in the softness of the pillows to gaze contentedly round the room while he savored a warm, pleasant feeling of relaxation that he had not known for some time. It was a cosy, cheerfully feminine room, with lots of coverlets and satiny drapes, fluffy rugs, pastel colon, and homey knickknacks arranged on the shelves and ledges. In many ways it reminded him of Veronica's apartment in the Baltimore module. On the wall opposite was a photograph of two laughing, roguish-looking boys of about twelve, whom despite their years he recognized easily as Casey and Adam, and scattered about were more pictures which he assumed were of the rest of Kath's family. The one in a frame on the vanity resembled Adam. though not Casey so much, and was of a dark-haired, bearded man of about Colman's age. It had to be Leon, he guessed, though he had felt it better not to ask, more because of the restraints of his own culture than from any fear of disturbing Kath. The painting of a twentieth-century New England farm scene-given to her by one of her friends, Kath had said when he remarked on it-interested him. Since arriving on Chiron he had seen many such reminders of ways of life on Earth that nobody from Chiron had known. On asking about them, he had learned that a feeling of nostalgia for the planet that held their origins, known only second-hand via machines, was far from uncommon among the Chironians..miracle. Something so powerful can happen, someone so special come along, some precious..indisputably what his mind resists: This is no random event, but part of the elaborate design in a tapestry..place, less than twenty-four hours ago..Jay and Marie were her latest weapons. Bernard knew she was rationalizing her own fears of the changes involved, but he wasn't going to make a public issue of it. "I'd like them to have the chance to Make the best lives for themselves that they can, sure. They've got that chance right here. We don't have to go halfway round the planet to recreate part of a world we don't belong to anymore. It couldn't last. That's all over now. You have to bring yourself to face up to it, hon."